

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6535
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
UNINT BAGHDAD 699
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY JUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: SOPN, SY
SUBJ: SYRIAN MEDIA CONTRADICTION ON MEANING OF SADAT'S WITHDRAWAL
OF EGYPTIAN FORNMIN FROM JERUSALEM TALKS

1. SYRIAN PRESS JAN 19 DEVOTED LAVISH COVERAGE TO ANTI-SADAT
RALLY IN LATAKIA PREVIOUS DAY BUT STILL MANAGED TO FIT
STORIES ABOUT SUSPENSION OF JERUSALEM TALKS ON FRONT PAGES.
AL-BAATH ACCOUNT WAS FOR THE MOST PART FACTUAL AND FAIRLY
COMPLETE BUT THE LEAD PARAGRAPH, COMMENTS BY "OBSERVERS,"
AND THE LIBERAL USE OF EXCLAMATION MARKS WERE USED TO DRIVE
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HOME THE POINT THAT THIS WAS PART OF A "CONSPIRACY" CONDUCTED
IN STAGES BY WHICH SADAT WOULD SOON CONCLUDE A BILATERAL
DEAL "CONCEDING EVERYTHING." OBSERVERS WERE QUOTED AS SAYING
THAT EGYPT'S PULLING OUT OF THE TALKS "WAS ABSOLUTELY NOT
BECAUSE OF THE EXISTENCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SADAT'S REGIME
AND ISRAEL OVER THE SUBJECT OF THE PALESTINIANS BUT ONLY MEANT
THERE EXISTED DIFFERENCES OVER THE SETTLEMENTS IN SINAI."

THE WRITER INJECTED "WE DON'T BELIEVE THERE IS ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM AT ALL."

2. EDITORIALS WERE CONTRADICTORY IN THEIR INTERPRETATION OF THESE EVENTS. SOME COLUMNISTS WROTE THAT THE TALKS HAD FAILED WHILE OTHERS TOOK THE SAME LINE AS THE AL-BAATH ARTICLE WHICH SAW THIS AS A PLOY BY SADAT PRIOR TO CONCLUDING A SEPARATE BILATERAL AGREEMENT. THAWRA COLUMNIST WROTE, "THE FURSTRATED OUTCOME (OF THE TALKS) CONSTITUTES A DENUNCIATION OF ANWAR SADAT." HE GOES ON TO STATE THAT THIS IS PROBABLY A NEW EPISODE IN THE JOINT PLOT AND THAT SADAT WILL STRIVE--DESPITE ISRAEL'S REFUSAL TO AGREE "TO HIS CAPITULATIONIST TERMS"--TO CONCLUDE A PARTIAL SETTLEMENT.

3. TISHRIIN COLUMNIST TAKES DIFFERENT TACT. WHILE ALSO CLAIMING THAT THIS GESTURE OF "DEFIANCE" BY SADAT WAS MEANT TO DECEIVE ARAB PUBLIC OPINION, WH CONCLUDED THAT SADAT'S CAPITULATIONIST POLICY HAS MET IST DOWNFALL. HE SQUARELY GAVE CREDIT FOR THIS TO THE "STEADFASTNESS FRONT." AL-BAATH EDITORIAL CLAIMS US TRYING TO OVERCOME PALESTINIAN EMPASSE BY MEANS OF "A SECRET PLOT" TO RESETTLE THE PALESTINIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON.

4. COMMENT: INTIAL MEDIA REACTIONS SUGGEST THAT SYRIANS CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT ALL THIS REALLY MEANS BUT ARE DETERMINED TO EXPLOIT THIS "FAVORABLE" DEVELOPMENT TO THE HILT.
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MURPHY

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